



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://feedthefuture.gov/article/center-excellence-takes-guesswork-out-lab-work>

A Center of Excellence Takes the Guesswork Out of Lab Work



ENGINE/Jhpiego/ Save the Children

Sofanit Sisay, a graduating nutrition student at Hawassa University, practicing lab work.

Learning in the laboratory is an essential component of nutrition education. Such hands-on experience gives students opportunities to practice basic skills like measurement, analysis and observation.

In Ethiopia, Hawassa University's Academic Center of Excellence for Nutrition had a laboratory, but it was in bad shape. It was disorganized and lacked adequate equipment and workspaces. Today, things are different.

As part of its support to the Government of Ethiopia to help reduce maternal and child malnutrition, Feed the Future renovated the existing lab and equipped it with instruments for conducting studies such as hemoglobin, nutrient, and body-composition analysis. With the new equipment, post-graduate students, as well as those who come from foreign universities, are able to do advanced research at the lab.

The lab also enhances the development of comprehensive competencies established in the center's newly revised curriculum. Before the renovation, the old lab lacked both utensils and a facility for cooking demonstrations. Now, students are able to gain hands-on experience in conducting cooking demonstrations and practicing complementary feeding with the tools the renovated lab offers.

All in all, the lab has expanded the Center's capacity to train nutrition teachers, researchers and community educators. Currently, 250 undergraduates, 50 post-graduates, and approximately 350 students from other universities are using the lab. Many of its undergraduates will go on to work with NGOs, local governments, and private organizations to provide community nutrition services. Its graduates in the master's degree program will likely work in academic institutions or in federal-, regional- or district-level nutrition and agriculture programs.

"Previously, there was a gap with what we were taught in theory and what we learned in the skills lab, which I think was due to lack of equipment and adequate facilities," said Sofanit Sisay, a graduating nutrition student. "But now things have improved and we are learning what we need to know in the skills lab before we go out to the community for practice."

What's more, the lab is now able to serve a broader community of students. Since its renovation, the lab has provided space and opportunities for instructors and lab assistants recruited from other universities and colleges to receive in-service education and technical update trainings.